



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – May 2012

The Sonoma County Water Agency is continually planning and implementing the Russian River Biological Opinion requirements. To better communicate the progress and timeline of this work, the Water Agency has provided the below outline of project updates. For more detailed information about these activities, please visit www.sonomacountywater.org.

Dry Creek Demonstration Project

- The Dry Creek Demonstration Project reached the 90% design level at the end of October. Discussions with landowners regarding right-of-way and construction are ongoing.
- On the permitting front, a draft 1600 Agreement from Fish and Game has been amended and is expected to be finalized within days; a 401 water quality certification permit from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and a permit from the Corps of Engineers permit are anticipated by the end of May.
- Bids were received in early April for large woody debris (redwood/douglas fir trees and trees with root wads) and enough material has been identified to meet the needs of the demonstration project.
- Interfluve, the consulting firm, is preparing construction contract documents for summer 2012 for those enhancements on properties where signed right-of-way agreements are nearly complete.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Study

- In December, InterFluve submitted the Draft Conceptual Design Report for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement draft feasibility study. This report presents conceptual designs for potential habitat improvements areas beyond the 1-mile demonstration project. A meeting will be held at the end of May to finalize the report.
- The Water Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working with consultants, ESSA, to develop clear success measures for habitat enhancement. The plan should be completed in 2012.

Tributary Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Projects

- In mid-April, fishery staff installed downstream migrant traps in the Russian River, at Mirabel, in Dry Creek, Mark West Creek and Dutch Bill Creek. To date, thousands of juvenile steelhead and coho have been counted and released in daily checks of traps.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

- The Water Agency received a \$255,000 California Department of Fish and Game Fishery Restoration Grant for design of the project. The 65% design was received in mid-March, and was reviewed by Water Agency staff.
- In late March, staff submitted a grant application to CDFG for construction funds for the fish ladder.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- A three-year general lease was received from the State Lands Commission for the estuary management project.

- A Marine Mammal Protection Act Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) was received from National Marine Fisheries Service for activities that could potentially disturb seals (and other pinnipeds). As in past years, the IHA requires extensive monitoring of seals prior, during and after any beach activity. In addition, it requires bi-monthly monitoring of seals and limits activities when seal pups are on the beach.
- Staff is gearing up for the 2012 monitoring season, and anticipates beginning biological monitoring and water quality monitoring in May.
- The Estuary Management Project final Environmental Impact Report was certified in August and the Board of Directors approved the project. On September 16, a lawsuit was filed by the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee challenging the EIR.

Fish Flow Project

Work is occurring internally on the preparation of the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project.

- EIR Schedule
 - Release Draft EIR in summer 2012
 - Release Final EIR in summer 2013
 - BO requires Board to certify Final EIR by September 24, 2013
 - EIR will be prepared by Water Agency staff, with assistance from consultants on some areas of impact analysis.

Interim Flow Changes

- The State Water Resources Board issued a 2012 Temporary Urgency Change order on May 2. The order requires fisheries reports, water quality monitoring and recognizes the continuing efforts by the contractors and Water Agency with regard to water use efficiency.
- Reports for the 2011 TUC were submitted to the State Water Board on March 31, 2012.

Public Outreach

- Plans are underway for extensive outreach on the Dry Creek habitat enhancement demonstration project, which is slated to begin construction this summer.
- The USACE and the Water Agency co-hosted a ribbon-cutting at the new building housing the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program on May 2.